National Biological Information Infrastructure

BioBot, the Biological Search Engine for the Internet

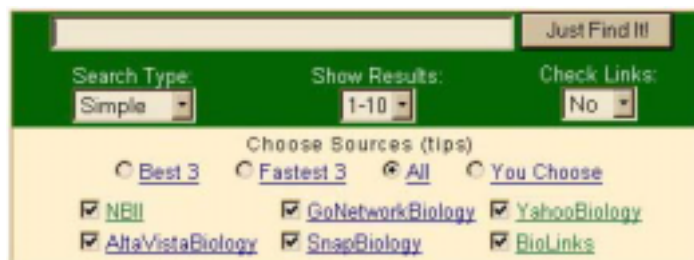Today, the Internet can be likened to an information bazaar. The good news is, the content has exploded in recent years. The bad news is, the content has exploded in recent years — along with the number of information sources on biological resources. At times, the bazaar is almost bizarre. Those who need to learn more about a particular species or, perhaps, broader environmental issues can be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of data and information available.

To deal with this dilemma, the National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII) product development team now offers users a new and truly unique tool for the biological community called "BioBot."

NBII customers can use BioBot to:

- Search NBII information as well as other biological information available on the Internet through sources such as SnapBiology, AltaVista, and Yahoo. These vendors and others are currently indexing and harvesting information from a number of biological sites. BioBot builds upon this information, allowing users to easily access the biological information they want.

- Define ("profile") specific information of interest — which BioBot will then deliver to the user's desktop daily, weekly, biweekly, or monthly, as the user prefers (search results are presented back to the user in a ranked, concise format); and

- Combine BioBot with other biological information systems, such as the Integrated Taxonomic Information System (ITIS), to learn species and taxonomic information (ITIS <www.itis.usda.gov> is the first comprehensive, standardized reference for the scientific names of the flora and fauna of North America and surrounding oceans).

BioBot has two distinct parts. The first, above, is the main search screen, which offers a wide variety of options for finding information. For instance, users can indicate which of the Internet's leading biological information sources they want to employ (such as BioLinks, GoNetworkBiology, or YahooBiology). Search types include a simple search, Boolean search, and phrase searches.

Right: The second main part of BioBot, MyNBIIFilter, gives users the opportunity to define their interest(s) and how often information of interest will be delivered to them (daily, weekly, biweekly, or monthly).

MyNBIIFilter Home Page

Options: Add A Query | Delete All Queries | Help | Sign Off

	Query String	Edit Options	View Results	Delete Query	Rerun Now
1	invasive species	Edit	View	Delete	Rerun

For example, a user who needs information on "invasive species" simply defines that interest through MyNBIIFilter. BioBot then scours the Web for "invasive species" and delivers this information to a personal Web page, electronically notifying the user at the specified time interval that the information is available. Further customization of these search and information delivery features is also possible.

BioBot can save the biotic Web surfer valuable time. It also lets NBII customers receive on-the-fly, up-to-date biological information from their Web pages. Plus, BioBot offers online assistance. In fact, it being

designed to help both novice and expert searchers find information of interest. Sample search terms and online/context sensitive help will both be available.

NBII users are urged to look for BioBot at <www.nbii.gov/search/biobot/>, then try it out. Whether they are in search of serious scholastics, commonsense help, or even info-tainment with a biological edge, they should be pleased with the results. They may even find that their interest in searching for biological information starts to grow as fast as the Web's biological content!